

Hawaiian Gazette

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TUESDAY, JULY 2, 1889.

The Johnstown disaster is even worse than at first represented. Between 12,000 and 15,000 persons have been lost by the inundation and fire. There is no doubt that the disaster is largely due to culpable negligence. The dam of Conemaugh lake had been examined and was declared to be unsafe, yet no steps were taken to remedy its condition. With the first heavy rains, the disaster came, followed with death and ruin. Those who are responsible should be indicted and tried for manslaughter. The lives of 12,000 persons might have been saved by promptly reconstructing the dam. It was but a few years ago that a dam in Massachusetts broke away under similar circumstances, and destroyed several hundred lives. And probably similar occurrences have happened in other places.

EVERY now and then a question of land tenure comes up and the old surveys are appealed to which are found very unsatisfactory. The fact is that the original land surveys were carelessly made by incompetent men, and that still surveys are made by such men. For practical working, for accurate working, we doubt whether many surveys made by students from Lāhainaluna soon after they left that institution are worth very much more than the paper that they are put on. And yet, the ownership of a great many small pieces of land depends upon such careless surveying as this. The survey office is doing all it can with the limited means at its disposal to do good work; but small land owners will employ such inefficient help in surveying that they will only have themselves to thank for coming out at the wrong end of the horn when the day of reckoning comes. It only requires a clever lawyer and a smart surveyor to make a stir among the dovecotes. The smart surveyor and the clever lawyer will crop up some day, and our people should take time by the forelock and look to what they own. We know whereof we speak.

The transfer of the lepers from Kakaako to the new Kalili asylum, which took place on Thursday, week before last, so quietly that but few persons knew of the event, puts an end to the Kakaako disgrace, at the entrance of the port. It was an unsightly object located where it would be the first thing to attract the eyes of the visitor. Now it stands beyond the town, in a secluded spot, where no one can see it, unless he goes to it for that purpose. In its construction, a separate place has been prepared for persons suspected of having the disease. This has long been needed, and we trust that the Board of Health will require suspects to be kept in the place which has been prepared for them, and not be allowed to eat, sleep and mingle with the crowds which are found in our streets daily. It is generally supposed that the number of lepers at large is now smaller than it has been for years. But vigilance is still as necessary as ever to stamp out this deadly virus, which is communicated chiefly by infected and non-infected persons eating, drinking, smoking, and sleeping together in the same house and at the same table.

The Board of Health comes in for a good deal of animadversion, but what Board of Health does not? The position of the members of the Board of Health is an invidious one. To do their duty they must stand on people's corns. If any one wants a graphic picture of what a Board of Health has to face let him read Kingsley's "two years' ago." The plucky doctor in that has to face all kinds of abuse and ignorance. As far as we can learn, though all the officers employed may not be the best material, the Board itself is most earnest in its efforts to have everything properly conducted. There has been instituted a regular house to house visitation of the city. How many of the growers are acquainted with the fact? The leprosy question has been met in as determined a manner as it is possible to meet such a terrible issue and each island of the group is steadily and quietly being made clean.

The question is one of the most

vital to the country. The day that we can write ourselves clean from this disease will be a happy one for us. As facts now stand there is not, nor has there ever been any danger for the casual passer by or for the man who lives cleanly in the Hawaiian Islands. Those who suffer from leprosy have themselves or their parents to thank for the condition they are in.

Nor long ago, some letters appeared in the papers relative to schools in the Hawaiian language, and we have been keeping a sharp eye on the matter and on the action of the Board of Education. In the district of Honolulu, with which we can make ourselves personally acquainted, we learn that the Waikiki-kai, the Kamoiliili, and the Manoa schools have been, at the express wish of the parents, converted from Hawaiian into English schools. This process of "choking" the Hawaiian has, we are credibly informed, resulted as far as the district of Honolulu is concerned in a rather curious manner.

According to the biennial report presented to the Legislature in 1888, the school at Manoa numbered 15 children, that at Kamoiliili numbered 26, and that at Waikiki-kai 24; a total of 65. The buildings were at that time admirably adapted for teaching, and no new ones have since been erected in either of these places. At the urgent request of parents, however, these schools have been converted into English schools, with the following results which we tabulate:

	1888.	1889.
Manoa	15	42
Kamoiliili	26	49
Waikiki-kai	24	35
Total	65	126

This shows most conclusively that when these schools were carried on in the Hawaiian language there were very nearly one hundred per cent. less children attending them than there are now that they are converted into English schools. And this in the face of increased facilities of travel to reach any kind of school the parents might wish. One example will serve to illustrate for the whole Islands. The Board of Education have been doing their duty, and facts are showing the wisdom of what they are doing; while just as forcibly are facts demonstrating that the reactionists are very much behind the age.

THE AUSTRALIAN BOTTLE TREE.

Among the singular and rare plants of the world is the Australian bottle tree, an indigenous tree of a limited portion of tropical Queensland and found nowhere else in Australia or on the globe. The native habitat of this peculiar specimen of vegetation is on the eastern coast range of mountains within the parallels of 18 and 21 degrees of south latitude. The soil on which it grows is dry, the areas are level to a limited extent, and elevated above sea level over 1,000 feet.

This tree takes its name from the shape of its trunk, which is wonderfully like the outlines of a giant bottle of the common order. The thick part of the trunk from the ground upward is from 50 to 60 feet high, from 30 to 40 feet in circumference and quite straight up to where the neck tapers to the spreading foliage above all. The bark of the trunk is about 3 feet thick, of a brown color and of a cork-like consistency. The foliage, which is very graceful, spreads from the top of the tree, and the branches have their base in the top of the "neck." The leaves are similar in size and shape to those of a cherry tree, but their color and consistency are much lighter. The spread of the branches and foliage form a regularly shaped dome of about 40 feet in diameter and of moderate density, giving ample shade from the rays of the sun. These bottle trees grow in groves from 10 to 30 in each, and are not less than 100 feet apart from each other, although other trees intervene in places. There is generally good pasture, and very little undergrowth of bushes where bottle trees grow. Their appearance on the landscape is very striking and unique, but there is a quaint beauty in the tout ensemble nevertheless; and the tree, although strange, is rather handsome in the spread of its foliage. Even the elephantine appearance of the trunk is not unhandsome when the eye becomes accustomed to its shape.

Several attempts have been made to have bottle trees transplanted to botanical gardens in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and other Australian cities, but little success has attended these efforts. There are,

however, two small specimens in the Brisbane, Queensland, gardens; but whether these were transplanted from their native wilds or grown from seeds, the writer did not learn. Bottle trees cast seeds once a year; but, from the great scarcity of young specimens around the old trees, it may be inferred that the seeds are not fruitful.

We would recommend to the conservators of the Hawaiian Government nursery that an application be made to the curator of the Brisbane, Queensland, government botanical gardens for seeds or cuttings of this singular tree, in order that it may be grown in these islands and become one of our exotics. If the introduction of the Australian bottle tree could become a success in Honolulu, the city would have one other attraction to visitors from abroad which could not fail to be impressive on account of its strange and yet comely appearance.

THE SEATTLE FIRE.

The most absorbing topic of news received by the barkentine *Discovery*, is the destruction of the business portion of Seattle by fire. This was one of the largest conflagrations that

ever occurred on the Pacific Coast, and involved a loss variously estimated at from ten to fifteen millions of dollars. Serious as the destruction is, it is fortunate that the calamity did not take place in winter; and that the people rendered homeless by the fire, have not had to encounter the rigors of climate common to winters on Puget Sound.

The losses recorded in another column will affect the whole coast more or less; but there is some relief in the thought that the citizens of the burned city are showing great activity in taking measures for rebuilding their once prosperous and progressive "queen city of the Sound." There is also much satisfaction in the fact that the citizens of the surrounding cities and towns rushed so nobly to the rescue; and, although they could not arrest the flames, they gave such help as the necessities of the occasion required.

From the latest indications to hand, there is every promise that Seattle will in a very short time arise Phoenix-like from its ashes; and bud afresh in renewed beauty, and more substantial buildings than before the calamity that has so recently befallen its citizens.

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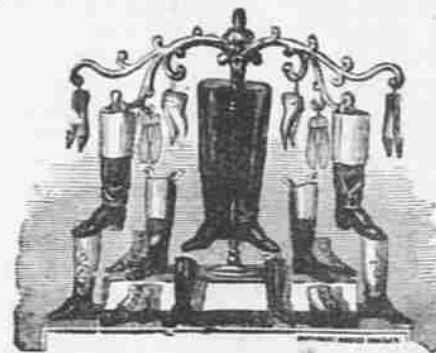
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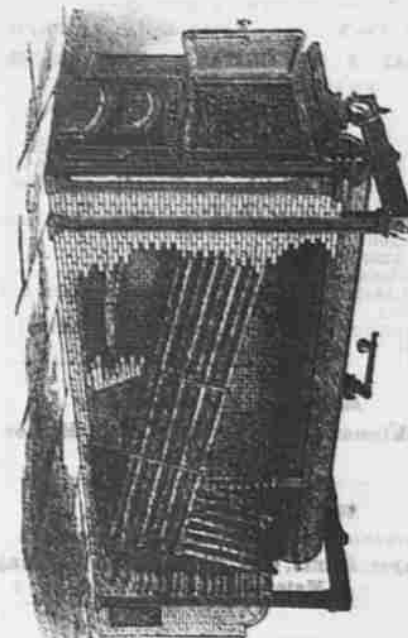
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